



Department of Health

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Polio Q&A for Nassau County Sept 9, 2022

Q: Is there polio in Nassau County?

A: We do not know of a case of an individual being sick with polio in Nassau County, but we have detected polio in the wastewater (sewage) in the county. The polio found in Nassau's wastewater is genetically linked the kind of polio that caused a case of paralysis in a Rockland County resident. At least one person, and probably more than one person, has this same kind of polio and shed the virus in their stool (by going to the bathroom) in Nassau County.

Q: What is polio?

A: Polio is a serious and life-threatening disease. A virus that can affect the nervous system and cause muscle weakness, some polio cases can result in paralysis or death. **There is no cure for polio, but disease is preventable through safe and effective vaccination. All adults should make sure they and their children and up to date with all recommended polio shots.**

Q: How does polio spread:

A: Polio is very contagious. It spreads from person-to-person through contact with the poop (often tiny, invisible amounts) of an infected person. More rarely, it can spread through the sneeze or cough droplets from an infected person.

- This can happen when someone is in close contact with an infected person, such as by caring for them or sharing food or utensils with them.
- Not everyone who is infected with polio will show symptoms. Some have mild or flu-like symptoms (fatigue, fever, headache, stiffness, muscle pain, vomiting) that can be easily mistaken for another type of virus. These symptoms can take up to 30 days to appear, during which time an infected individual can be shedding virus to others.
- Still, all infected people can spread the virus and infect others, even if they have no symptoms.
- The best way New Yorkers and children can ensure they are protected from this highly contagious virus that can cause paralysis and even death is by staying up to date with polio immunizations.

Q: What are the symptoms of polio?

A: Polio is highly infectious. There are a range of symptoms people infected with polio may experience, ranging from having no symptoms, to mild and flu-like symptoms such as fatigue, fever, headache, stiffness, muscle pain, or vomiting, to serious symptoms, including paralysis,

permanent disability or post-polio syndrome, and even death. For more information, visit health.ny.gov/polio.

Q: How can I protect myself against polio?

A: New Yorkers and children by 2 months of age can protect themselves by getting immunized and staying up to date with their polio immunization schedule. The inactivated polio vaccine (IPV), which is the only polio vaccine that has been given in the United States since 2000, protects 99 – 100 percent of people who get all the recommended doses:

- All children should get four doses of the polio vaccine, with the first dose given at 6 weeks through 2 months of age, followed by one dose given at 4 months of age, 6 through 18 months old, and 4 through 6 years old.
- Adults who are unimmunized or don't think they have been immunized should receive 3 doses.
- Adults who have only had 1 or 2 doses of the polio vaccine in the past should get the remaining 1 or 2 doses – it does not matter how long it has been since the earlier doses.
- Adults who are at increased risk of exposure to poliovirus and who have previously completed a routine series of polio vaccine (IPV or OPV) can receive one lifetime booster dose of IPV. At this time, increased risk includes those who may have been exposed to an individual with paralytic polio and some professional workers, including some healthcare professionals and wastewater workers in the areas where poliovirus has been detected.
- Long included on [CDC's child and adolescent immunization schedule](#) and [NYSDOH's required school immunization list](#), all school-age New Yorkers must be immunized before they start school. This means many New Yorkers should already be fully and safely immunized.
- While immunization is the only way to protect against disease, including paralytic disease, handwashing with soap is also important to prevent the spread of germs. Alcohol-based sanitizers do not work on some types of germs, like polio.

Q: If I am already vaccinated, should I get a polio booster?

A: A booster is not recommended for most people. A booster should be considered only for people who may have come into contact with a person or a person's family who are known or suspected to have polio; health care workers who might handle polio specimens or treat people who may have polio; or people who may work with wastewater as part of their jobs in areas where poliovirus has been detected.

Q: If I got vaccinated in another country, do I need to get vaccinated again?

A: No. if you were fully vaccinated in another country, you are fully protected. See above for those eligible for a booster. If you are unsure of your vaccination status, contact a healthcare provider to make sure you get all recommended doses.

Q: If I am immunocompromised but fully vaccinated, should I get a booster?

A: No, that isn't necessary.

Q: If I'm not sure whether I am fully vaccinated, should I get a shot?

A: If you don't think you have been vaccinated, get vaccinated.

Q: What is the state doing to protect people from polio?

A: The Health Department is going to work with the county health department, CDC, local leaders, and community partners to encourage anyone in the county who is not vaccinated or up to date with their vaccinations to get all recommended doses. We need everyone's help to increase the vaccination rate to protect everyone in the county.